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Letter dated 19 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations, in collaboration with the Permanent Missions of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and Italy, will host an Arria-formula meeting on the theme "Water, peace and security".

The meeting will be held in the Economic and Social Council Chamber on Friday, 26 October at 3 p.m. The concept note for this meeting is enclosed (see annex).

I have the honour to request the distribution of the enclosed concept note as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Karel J. G. **van Oosterom**
Ambassador

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Annex to the letter dated 19 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Arria-formula meeting on the theme "Water, peace and security", to be held on 26 October 2018

Introduction

1. In his briefing to the Security Council on peacebuilding and sustaining peace on 25 April 2018, the Secretary-General stated that "the human and financial cost of focusing our efforts on responding to crises is unsustainable". In order to maintain international peace and stability, the Security Council cannot ignore the importance of prevention of conflict. The Secretary-General further argued that "most critically, building and sustaining peace requires addressing the root causes of conflicts and crises".

2. The root causes of conflict are manifold and intertwined. Political, social and economic factors can all affect stability, as can environmental developments and the availability of natural resources. In this regard, the security risks related to climate, water stress [1] and environmental changes — either as root causes or threat multipliers — are often overlooked. Water stress threatens communities directly, and it can contribute to the outbreak of violent conflict and instability within and among societies.

3. A high level of water stress can affect economic development and food security. It puts water-related ecosystems under threat and can increase competition and potential conflict among users and result in displacement and migration. More than 2 billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress, and levels of water stress are likely to increase. The effects of climate change on water could increase, resulting in more frequent and severe extreme events and disasters such as droughts and floods.

4. Water is seldom the only driver of conflict, but is often among the important contributing factors. This calls for strengthened global monitoring of developments relating to water quantity and quality and strengthened water diplomacy, as it represents a major contribution to maintaining international peace and security. [2]

Water in the Security Council

5. The Security Council is starting to prove that it is responsive to the security impact of water stress. The Council discussed the growing threat of water scarcity to social, economic and political gains and the issue of water as a driver of conflict at an Arria-formula meeting and debate, respectively, both organized by Senegal in 2016. At a briefing on preventive diplomacy in transboundary waters, initiated by Bolivia in 2017, the Secretary-General stated that "Water, peace and security are inextricably linked". Members underlined the need for timely information-sharing and early warning and agreed that the topic should be part of the prevention agenda of the Council.

6. At a debate organized by Germany in 2011, the Security Council recognized the importance of including the security implications of climate change, as a possible

[1] Water stress refers to a situation of water scarcity, a surplus of water or water pollution, which can cause drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity.

[2] See, for instance, United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goal 6: Synthesis report on water and sanitation", 2018.

driver of conflict, in conflict analysis and contextual information (S/PRST/2011/15). During an Arria-formula meeting on climate change (organized by Italy in 2017), a briefing on the Lake Chad Basin (initiated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2018) and a debate on climate-related security risks (organized by Sweden in 2018), briefers and Council members alike urged the United Nations to carry out adequate risk assessments and develop risk management strategies accordingly.

7. In addition, the Security Council has reflected its concern about the security risks of water stress regarding several country-related and regional situations, "including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity", and has emphasized the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by Governments and the United Nations relating to these factors (resolution 2349 (2017)). It expressed similar concerns with regard to West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/3), Somalia (resolutions 2408 (2018) and 2431 (2018)), the Sudan (resolution 2429 (2018)) and Mali (resolution 2423 (2018)).

8. With regard to Central Africa, the Council, in addition, requested that such information be taken into consideration by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in its activities (S/PRST/2018/17). The Council requested the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan "to provide information of such assessments in mandated reporting as appropriate" (resolution 2429 (2018)). In his latest report on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, in June 2018 (S/2018/649), the Secretary-General touched upon these security implications.

Objectives

9. This Arria-formula meeting serves to further explore ways for the United Nations system to implement the above-mentioned mandates, for the Security Council to be provided with information on risk assessments related to climate change and water stress, and for the Council to make timely and informed decisions to ensure that the root causes of conflict, including water-related security risks, are addressed.

10. During this meeting, participants could:

- Identify ways for the Security Council to be informed in a timely fashion on potential threats to international peace and security and to ensure that preventive action is taken (early warning, early action).
- Define the capacity and coordination the United Nations needs to better understand and respond to security risks related to water stress.
- Ensure that the United Nations and the international community as a whole take water-related security risks into account when addressing the root causes of potential conflicts.

11. Participants could consider the following questions:

- How can the United Nations respond more effectively and coherently to early warning signs?
- What kind of reporting, risk analysis and risk assessment should be provided and when?
- How can the Security Council be informed, adequately and in a timely fashion, about potential areas for instability and conflict, including hotspots related to water stress?
- Which options does the Security Council have to ensure that concrete action is taken to address water-related security risks?

- How can we encourage cooperation on prevention of conflict and monitoring of root causes of conflict, including water stress, between the Security Council and other relevant United Nations agencies and the international community?

Panellists and Moderator

12. The panellists are:

- Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace
- Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs
- Mr. Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director of the World Resources Institute, on behalf of the Water, Peace and Security Initiative

The Moderator is Ambassador Lise Gregoire van Haaren, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Format

13. Following introductory remarks by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the panellists will make presentations of eight minutes each. The floor will then be opened for Security Council members, co-hosts, and Member States to speak and ask questions of the panellists for a maximum of three minutes each. Should there be questions for the panellists, and if time permits, the panellists will be able to address questions from the audience.

14. The organizer invites all Member States, as well as permanent observers and non-governmental organizations, to attend. The meeting will be open to the press. Interpretation will be available in all official languages of the United Nations.

Follow-up

15. A report on the meeting will be drafted and shared with the Secretariat and other interested parties. Specific recommendations from the Arria-formula meeting will be suggested to relevant parties, including Member States, think tanks and knowledge hubs, in order to strengthen coordinated awareness-raising, analysis and action on water, peace and security.